



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



ZIMMERMAN SPEAKS AT 95TH EVACUATION HOSPITAL OF DANANG REUNION

This weekend, 82 members of the 95th Evacuation Hospital of DaNang gathered in Rapid City for their reunion. They meet every other year.

Roger Papeka served as the host for the event. SDDVA's Secretary Zimmerman was the keynote speaker.

In 1928, the Office of the Surgeon General constituted a group of surgical hospitals. These were large hospitals with the primary mission of providing surgical support for a field Army. One of these hospitals, the 95th, existed only on paper for years. Because of the buildup in Vietnam, the 95th was activated March 26, 1963, at Ft. Benning, Georgia and alerted for overseas movement. On March 26, 1968, the 95th Evacuation Hospital arrived in the Republic of Vietnam to carry on in the outstanding tradition of its predecessors.

The wide range of professional capabilities made the 95th Evacuation Hospital a referral center for difficult cases throughout the Northern Military Combat Tactical Region. Specialty services including neurology, dermatology, oral surgery, psychiatric consultations, orthopedic surgery, general surgery and special radiographic procedures were provided by this team.

This was not only an evacuation hospital but a trauma surgical hospital as

well and was continually harassed by enemy action in the nearby areas requiring personnel to put in grueling 12 hour shifts of patient care and then stand watch on the perimeter the other 12 hours.

For all the veterans who served at the 95th Evac, thank you! For those that were treated by this talented team of experts, we are glad you made it back!



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GOLD STAR FAMILIES RECOGNIZED

Last weekend, the Custer VFW provided a great opportunity for their community to honor three of their heroes. Vietnam Veterans PVT 1st Class Howard Elmer Drain, Specialist 5th Class Steven Allen Trant, and 1st LT James P. Wright were recognized for their service and sacrifice to this great country.

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman was the keynote speaker for the ceremony and thanked the families of these special heroes.

Their program included the presentation of personalized "Honor and Remember" flags for the three Gold Star families.

The Honor and Remember Flag's design symbolizes the overall meaning of the flag's message.

The Red Field represents the blood spilled by brave men and women in America's military throughout our history, who willingly gave their lives so that we all would remain free.

The Blue Star represents active service in military conflict. This symbol originated with World War I, but on this flag it signifies service through all generations from the American Revolution to present day.

The White Border beneath and surrounding the gold star recognizes the purity of sacrifice. There is no greater price an American can pay than to give his or her life in service to our country.

The Gold Star signifies the ultimate sacrifice of a warrior in active service who will not return home. Gold reflects the value of the life that was given.

The Folded Flag signifies the final tribute to an individual life that a family sacrificed and gave to the nation.

The Flame is an eternal reminder of the spirit that has departed this life yet burns on in the memory of all who knew and loved the fallen hero.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that, as part of its recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month in May, it is promoting "Use Your Voice," a national awareness program that encourages veterans to seek mental health treatment if they need it.

MAKE THE
CONNECTION

USE YOUR VOICE

The "Use Your Voice" program is designed to let not only veterans, but all Americans know that reaching out for mental health information and support is just as important as talking to one's doctor about diet, blood pressure, joint pain and other health challenges.

"It's time to break down barriers and reverse the stigma of mental illness," said Dr. Poonam Alaigh, acting VA under secretary for Health. "We want veterans to know there are effective options available right now and reaching out for help is a sign of strength, resilience and courage." Individuals and organizations can make a difference and get involved by downloading, sharing, tweeting or posting a variety of content located at www.MakeTheConnection.net/UseYourVoice.

While many veterans do not experience mental health issues in their lifetime, it is critically important for those who do to know that support and treatment are available. By changing how people discuss mental health conditions and symptoms of mental illness, the VA is making it easier for veterans who need support to feel comfortable reaching out.

For more information on mental health treatment, veterans' personal stories of recovery and a locator tool to find veterans' resources across the country, visit the VA's Make the Connection website at <http://www.MakeTheConnection.net/UseYourVoice>.

FALLEN HEROES BANNERS



The South Dakota Fallen Heroes Banners exhibit will be on display at the Capitol Visitors Center in Pierre on Monday, May 29, from 9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT).

The display was created in 2009 and the mission for the exhibit is to honor, respect and forever memorialize those who sacrificed their lives protecting our freedom while serving in our Armed forces during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Pierre Veterans Service Organizations will be standing guard over the display of our heroes.



VA ANNOUNCES ADOPTION OF AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY MAMMOGRAM SCREENING GUIDELINES

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is adopting American Cancer Society (ACS) breast cancer screening guidelines that give women a choice to begin screening at age 40. The guidelines also recommend starting yearly mammograms by age 45 and then every other year from age 55. The guidelines apply to women at average risk for breast cancer and complement VA's already-extensive program for breast care for veterans.

"It is important for our women veterans to know they are in control of their care and the care they receive from the VA is consistent with or exceeds care in the private sector," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "Adopting American Cancer Society standards gives veterans further assurances that their care aligns with other health-care systems. Currently, 76 percent of women veterans age 40-49 receive mammograms through the VA."

In addition to adopting ACS guidelines for breast cancer screening, other notable achievements include:

- Expanded access to onsite mammograms by 62 percent;
- All eligible women veterans have access to mammograms either onsite or through care in the community;
- VA quality scores from the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS), show that women veterans are much more likely to receive age-appropriate breast cancer screening than women in private sector health care;
- In 2015, the VA provided mammogram screenings to 86 percent of its women veteran patients age 50-74, compared with the private sector at 73 percent; and
- VA has established a state-of-the-art information technology Breast Cancer Registry (BCR). The BCR integrates data from several VA sources to provide comprehensive patient specific information about breast cancer screening, test results, past and current breast cancer treatment, and population surveillance of breast care (both in the community and within the VA).

"Engaging and better servicing the unique health-care needs of our women veterans is one of the VA's most important priorities," said Dr. Poonam Alaigh, Acting Under Secretary for Health. "When it comes to their care, we want them to be in control of it *every day and in every way*."

For more information about the VA's commitment to women veterans, visit <https://www.va.gov/womenvet/> or call 855-VA-WOMEN (855-829-6636) for information about VA services and resources.



VA SECRETARY PRESSES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY LEGISLATION IN WAKE OF FEDERAL APPEALS RULING

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in *Helman v. United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)* ruled that the expedited Senior Executive Service (SES) removal and appeals authority provided by the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 is unconstitutional.

As a result of this ruling, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) has been directed to review the administrative judge's decision upholding the VA's November 2014 removal of the director of the Phoenix VA Healthcare System. The former director's removal remains in effect at this time.

Commenting on the ruling, VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin said, "Today's ruling underscores yet again the need for swift congressional action to afford the Secretary effective and defensible authority to take timely and meaningful action against the VA employees whose conduct or performance undermines veterans' trust in VA care or services.

"We appreciate the House passing H.R. 1259, VA Accountability First Act of 2017 as a vital step toward providing the tools necessary to address misconduct while ensuring due process. Just as importantly, we look forward to the Senate taking up the legislation and helping to ensure passage as soon as possible."

LOWER BRULE SIOUX TRIBE NAMES VSO

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Council has named Tim Felicia as their tribal veterans service officer effective April 20, 2017. Tim's hours will be 10:00 am—6:00 pm on the first and third Thursdays of the month.

Tim can be reached at 605.473.5666 or by email at: spottedtail71@yahoo.com.

Please join us in welcoming Tim to the SDDVA team of partners.



Upcoming Events

May 12—Improving Combat Veterans Care—Sioux Falls University Center

May 29—Memorial Day — Honor our Fallen Heroes

May 29—SD Fallen Heroes Banner Exhibit will be on display at the Capitol Lake Visitors Center in Pierre from 9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)

Jun 10—SD Marine Corps League Annual Meeting—Pierre Post 8 (520 W. Pierre Street) - 10:00 am (CT)

Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown—Ramkota

Jun 22-25—State VFW Convention—Pierre—Ramkota

Aug 14-17—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre—Ramkota

Here's
What's
Happening!



SDDVA Sec. Zimmerman stops to visit with visitors at the memorials!

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

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